

NEWS RELEASE



Office of the Attorney General Robert E. Cooper, Jr.

Department of Commerce and Insurance Commissioner Leslie Newman

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY JUDGE AWARDS STATE \$10.8 MILLION IN CASE AGAINST LENDER WHO TARGETED FT. CAMPBELL SOLDIERS

A Montgomery County judge has awarded the State of Tennessee over \$10.8 million in a case in which a lender is accused of using unlawful and predatory sales and lending practices targeting soldier from Ft. Campbell and elsewhere.

Attorney General Bob Cooper announced today his Consumer Advocate and Protection Division, on behalf of the Division of Consumer Affairs, won the case against California-based Rome Finance Company, Inc. ("Rome") in a consumer protection enforcement proceeding.

The judgment came as a result of a long history of refusals by Rome to abide by court orders requiring it to provide the Attorney General's Office with certain files and other information related to the case. The default judgment was awarded to the State as a sanction, after Rome and its owner Ronald M. Wilson walked out of a court-ordered deposition on May 28, 2008, just as the court was preparing to conduct a telephonic hearing.

The Montgomery County Circuit Court also found Rome in contempt of court and ordered Rome to pay the State of Tennessee all attorney fees and costs incurred in its case against Rome. In 2007, the State won part of its case against Rome through a partial summary judgment.

"Companies which unlawfully exploit the young men and women who are fighting for our country will not be tolerated in the State of Tennessee," said Attorney General Cooper, upon learning of the ruling. "This ruling should send a clear message to others who would take advantage of Tennesseans."

Today's judgment includes \$8,894,706 in restitution for consumers, \$395,000 in civil penalties for Rome's violations of the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act and \$1,000,000 in civil penalties for 500 admitted instances of Rome's contempt of court. The Court also awarded \$553,885 to the State as reimbursement of its costs.

"We are very proud of this outcome for consumers," said Mary Clement, Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs. "We are dedicated to helping consumers any way we can. We encourage consumers to continue to contact us."

Consumers who have complaints about any consumer matter should go online at <http://www.state.tn.us/consumer> or call the Division of Consumer Affairs at 615-741-5860 or toll-free in Tennessee at 1-800-342-8385.

The Attorney General's Office also expressed appreciation to the Ft. Campbell Consumer Affairs Office for its help in the case.